

FORGIVENESS AND BLAME

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It is generally thought that forgiveness presupposes blame or blameworthiness. When we *forgive* someone we say, for example, ‘you are to blame for doing *a*, but I forgive you for it’. Many writers on forgiveness mention this connection between forgiveness and blame, but without giving it more attention. The purpose of this paper is to examine in more detail the relation between forgiveness and blame or blameworthiness. I shall propose and consider an understanding of forgiveness as the setting aside of blame. But blame appears to vary depending on the circumstances of the case in which someone is responsible for doing wrong. Of particular interest is the issue of how a wrongdoer’s level of blameworthiness influences forgiveness. For example, it makes a difference whether the wrongdoer acted with the intention of harming the victim, or whether he was merely being negligent. I will consider some examples to illustrate the relation between forgiveness and levels of blameworthiness. Finally, I shall consider the question of whether we may also forgive those who are not strictly speaking to blame for the wrong they have done.